



# How to Conduct an Effective Medical Cannabis Lobby Visit

Meeting with your legislators and expressing your views on matters of public concern is one of the most effective ways to influence their votes. We have seen lawmakers who were indifferent to medical cannabis become supporters or even champions when they heard patients' personal stories. It is important to note that as elected officials, legislators are entrusted with great responsibility and expect respectful communication.

Below you will find a list of tips to keep in mind if you wish to visit your elected officials to make the case for allowing medical cannabis in your state. Use these tips to help prepare for any meeting with elected officials. Take them to heart, and you'll find that any meeting with your representatives, even if they disagree with your stance, can be productive.

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## Tip #1: Advance scheduling

Even if your visit is scheduled around a lobby day, it is advisable to try to schedule a meeting with your legislator well in advance. You can find your state legislator(s) [here](#). Legislators have busy schedules, and they may not be able to meet with constituents if the meeting is not scheduled in advance. Many lawmakers will meet with constituents either in the capital or in their legislative district on days when the legislature is not in session. If you have a serious illness, or traveling to the capital is otherwise a challenge, you may want to note that when requesting an in-district meeting.

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## Tip #2 Professionalism, professionalism, professionalism

This cannot be stressed enough. Be professional across the board. Dress professionally, be on time for your meeting, and watch your rhetoric. Do not use slang for "marijuana" or "cannabis." Do not disparage political parties, the government, or politicians. Do not wear anything displaying cannabis images — it will distract from your policy arguments.

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## Tip #3: Stay on topic

If you are lobbying for a medical cannabis bill, you should not bring up other issues, including legalization. Instead, you should have a specific and concrete request of the legislator such as voting for or co-sponsoring a specific bill.

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## Tip #4: Prepare

Know the issue and what you want to convey. If you or a loved one could benefit from medical cannabis, consider in advance how you want to convey that. If other medications haven't worked or have had problematic side effects, you may want to share that. You should also take the time to read over talking points and responses to common concerns provided [here](#). These talking points shown to be effective arguments for medical cannabis advocates. However, don't worry if you don't know every detail of the bill or every answer. Don't make up answers: Research after the meeting and write to follow up.

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### **Tip #5: Know the legislator**

You can find your legislator(s) [here](#). This can give you some valuable insight into their background and political platforms. Knowing this, you can better prepare your arguments to address specific concerns of the legislator, and you can find out if you have a connection with the lawmaker — such as an alma matter or church.

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### **Tip #6: Bring a couple of handouts**

Feel free to print and bring an appropriate amount of any helpful information you may find [here](#). There's a wealth of information about medical cannabis issues — such as summaries of studies, lists of supportive organizations, state-by-state polling, and rebuttals to common concerns. Do not overload your representatives with papers, but a succinct handout or two will allow them to further examine the issue after your visit.

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### **Tip #7: Be concise**

Legislators are very busy people, especially during legislative sessions. Keep this in mind. It is often worthwhile to engage in some initial getting-to-know-you conversation, but be sure to be respectful of their time and to get to the main purpose of the visit.

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### **Tip #8: Do not get mad**

Your representatives may not agree with you on your issues; do not let this anger you. Also, you may end up meeting with staff as opposed to the actual legislator. Again, do not let this throw you. Anger is unproductive. Respectfully disagreeing and countering concerns with fact-based arguments is a better way to have your voice heard. Never talk over the legislator or staffer, and do not get combative. Many legislators come around on marijuana policy issues after further examination, but hostility will reduce their chances of doing so. However your legislator may initially feel about your issue, it will be far better served if they see you as an informed, rational, and polite advocate for it.

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### **Tip #9: Relax and enjoy yourself**

Have fun. Legislators are typically friendly and outgoing people; it's hard to win an election otherwise. Smile and present yourself as a concerned citizen, regardless of whether you support the legislator. If you are relaxed, friendly, and confident, you will find the conversation flows better, and you'll get your points across more effectively.

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### **Tip #10: Follow Up**

Regardless of how the meeting goes or the legislator's stance on the issue, always follow up the meeting with a thank you card or email. If the legislator or staffer said they would get back to you on a question, be sure to follow up politely to request an answer. Additionally, if your legislators asked any questions you could not initially answer, provide succinct answers to those questions.

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